

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGRE-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9818
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ECON, DR
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BALAGUER'S INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH

1. PRESIDENT BALAGUER'S TRADITIONAL INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH
YESTERDAY BEFORE A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS WAS A VIRTUOSO PER-
FORMANCE. FROM ITS OPENING HOMAGE TO THE COUNTRY'S FOUNDING FATHER,
JUAN PABLO DUARTE, TO ITS FINAL EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE IN THE
FUTURE, THE SPEECH REPRESENTED A STRONG DEFENSE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S
ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND POLICIES AND AT THE SAME TIME COUNTERED DOMESTIC
CRITICS ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES AND PRESENTED ASSURANCES THAT THE PRES-
IDENT HIMSELF, DESPITE OBVIOUS PROBLEMS OF VISION, RETAINS HIS FULL
AND IMPRESSIVE CAPACITY. THE PRESIDENT SPOKE WITHOUT NOTES,
DEPARTING WIDELY FROM THE OFFICIAL VERSION OF THE SPEECH AND,
AS IS HIS CUSTOM, SKIPPING ENTIRELY OVER SEVERAL SECTIONS.
AT ONE POINT, IN AN OBVIOUS DEMONSTRATION THAT HIS VISION
WAS NOT FULLY IMPAIRED, BALAGUER "READ" TWO SHORT PARAGRAPHS
OF A CENTRAL BANK REPORT ON THE ECONOMIC PROSPECTS FOR 1977.

2. ALTHOUGH THE MATERIALS OF THE SPEECH WERE PRINCIPALLY
ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL, THE PERFORMANCE WAS
EMINENTLY POLITICAL. IN ADDITION TO THE SPECULATION THAT
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ALWAYS ATTENDS THE FEBRUARY 27 SPEECH, THERE WAS THIS YEAR
GREAT INTEREST IN EVIDENCE OF THE STATE OF HEALTH OF THE
PRESIDENT, ESPECIALLY HIS VISION. A LONG, INCREDIBLY
DETAILED RECAPITULATION, FROM MEMORY, OF THE FOREIGN
INDEBTEDNESS CONTRACTED SINCE 1962, WHILE REFLECTING ONE
OF THE PRESIDENT'S MAJOR PREOCCUPATIONS, WAS CLEARLY INTENDED
TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE THAT BALAGUER, EVEN WITHOUT GOOD VISION,

IS A FORMIDABLE, CAPABLE LEADER, IN FULL COMMAND.

3. HIGHLIGHTS OF HIS SPEECH:

(A) FOREIGN INDEBTEDNESS REMAINS A HEAVY BURDEN, BUT UNDER BALAGUER'S ADMINISTRATION THE DR HAS REPAID MORE THAN IT HAS BORROWED.

(B) AGRARIAN REFORM, MOVING SLOWER THAN ITS "PROGRESSIVE" CRITICS WOULD LIKE AND FASTER THAN ITS "CONSERVATIVE" CRITICS DESIRE, IS PROCEEDING AT AN APPROPRIATE PACE. THE SCARCITY OF AGRICULTURAL LAND AND THE HIGH BIRTH RATE CONTINUE TO LIMIT THE POSSIBILITIES.

(C) THE GOVERNMENT IS PROUD OF ITS PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMS AND WILL CONTINUE THEM.

(D) HUMAN RIGHTS CRITICISMS CENTER ON LIMITATIONS OF HABEAS CORPUS AND ON THE CONDITION OF JAILS. THE IMPORTANT FACTS ARE THAT THE HIGHEST AUTHORITIES OF THE COUNTRY HAVE NEVER USED PRESSURE IN HABEAS CORPUS MATTERS AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS FORMED A DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE TO ADVISE ON JAILS AND HAS BEGUN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ONES.

(E) FOREIGN RELATIONS ARE SATISFACTORY AND EVEN CUBA RESPECTS THE DOMINICAN POLICY OF NON-INTERVENTION. DESPITE RECENT RUMORS THAT HAITI WAS PREPARING AGGRESSION AGAINST THE DR, AS EVIDENCED BY PURCHASES OF TANKS AND PLANES, BOTH COUNTRIES ARE CONDEMNED TO LIVE LIKE SIAMESE TWINS ON THIS ISLAND AND MUST RETAIN GOOD RELATIONS.
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(F) THE EXECUTIVE HAS PRESENTED TO THE CONGRESS A BILL TO DEFINE THE TERRITORIAL SEA, THE CONTIGUOUS ECONOMIC ZONE AND THE CONTINENTAL SHELF.

(G) ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES FOR 1977 ARE GOOD, WITH INCREASED MINING AND TOURISM REVENUES OFFSETTING SOMEWHAT THE DECLINING SUGAR INCOME.

4. SEPTELS FOLLOW ON ECONOMIC POINTS, HUMAN RIGHTS, AGRARIAN REFORMS AND NEW MARITIME LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS.

HURWITCH

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